

27 June 2001

Text: **Swindells Named as Ambassador to New Zealand, Samoa**

(Swindells cites strong U.S. ties with both nations) (900)

The nominee for U.S. Ambassador to New Zealand and Samoa, Charles Swindells, says the United States and New Zealand cooperate in many areas — including trade, environmental, and regional security issues — despite differences over the use of nuclear-powered and nuclear-armed naval ships.

"We have worked together to foster a stronger and more open international trading system. We have a long tradition of friendship that gives our bilateral relationship a special vitality," he told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee at his confirmation hearing June 27.

Swindells said that the United States has always enjoyed "excellent relations" with Samoa.

"Although we did not open an embassy until 1988, our informal ties have existed for many years," he said, noting that "cultural and family ties" link Samoa and its close neighbor American Samoa.

Following is the text of Swindells' testimony, as prepared for delivery:

(begin text)

STATEMENT OF CHARLES J. SWINDELLS  
AMBASSADOR-DESIGNATE TO NEW ZEALAND AND SAMOA  
BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS  
UNITED STATES SENATE  
JUNE 27, 2001

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

I am honored to appear before you today as you consider my nomination to be Ambassador to New Zealand and the Country of Samoa. I am deeply grateful that President Bush has chosen to nominate me for this important post. If confirmed by the Senate, I look forward to working closely with this Committee and others in Congress to strengthen our close relationships with New Zealand and with Samoa as we advance significant American interests in the Pacific.

New Zealand is a close friend of the United States. We share a common language, common elements of history and culture, and a commitment to democratic principles and human rights. We have worked together to foster a stronger and more open international trading system. We have a long tradition of friendship that gives our bilateral relationship a special vitality. If confirmed, I will strive to build on that strong friendship.

New Zealand is a key partner in liberalizing international trade as we seek to launch a new World Trade Organization round this year and advance the APEC trade agenda. The United States is New Zealand's second largest trading partner after Australia. Bilateral trade has increased significantly in recent years, with total two-way trade reaching \$4.1 billion last year. The United States is also the second largest investor in New Zealand. Weyerhaeuser, Verizon, and Heinz are among the U.S. companies with major investments in New Zealand.

For almost 50 years, the U.S. Antarctic Program has supported operations in Antarctica from Christchurch, New Zealand. Our joint cooperative effort for our Antarctic programs serves as a model for other countries seeking to strengthen their own cooperative efforts in support of Antarctic science. For example, in April, after the onset of the Antarctic winter, seven ailing Americans required evacuation from McMurdo Station. All U.S. aircraft had returned home for the winter so a New Zealand Air Force C-130 heroically defied high winds and freezing temperatures to rescue our seven citizens.

We work closely with New Zealand on numerous important global and regional environmental issues. We have both taken active roles in preserving and protecting Antarctica. We support sustainable fisheries management in the Pacific, and other marine conservation initiatives. The United States and New Zealand have worked closely together in the UN to bring an end to high seas driftnet fishing.

Our difference with New Zealand over nuclear-powered vessels and its effect on our security relationship are well known. The United States and New Zealand are no longer treaty allies. Despite these differences, we have worked with New Zealand forces in the Persian Gulf and in peacekeeping operations elsewhere. It is worth remembering that New Zealand troops have fought and died alongside Americans in every major war of this century. Over 400,000 U.S. troops passed through New Zealand during World War II's Pacific campaigns. We have on-going discussions with New Zealand about how best to work together to promote and preserve regional security. We admire New Zealand's efforts to promote stability in the South Pacific, most recently in the Solomon Islands and East Timor, where the size of its commitment is second only to Australia's. New Zealand participates in 11 other peacekeeping missions worldwide.

The United States has always enjoyed excellent relations with Samoa. Although we did not open an embassy until 1988, our informal ties have existed for many years. Cultural and family ties link Samoa and its close neighbor American Samoa. The first U.S. government presence on Samoa dates from the establishment of a Peace Corps program in 1967, which today still provides educational and technical assistance to Samoa.

Mr. Chairman, if confirmed by the Senate, I will be responsible for managing our relationship with two close Pacific friends and a key trade ally. I am proud to have been nominated as Ambassador to New Zealand and to Samoa and intend to do my best to expand our excellent relations with both nations. If confirmed, I will work with the Congress and our interagency team in Wellington and here in Washington to further our important interests in New Zealand and in Samoa.

(end

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